THE BRITISH EMPIRE

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No. 81

Jews return to the Holy Land
PALESTINE: BRITAIN'S CROWN OF THORNS

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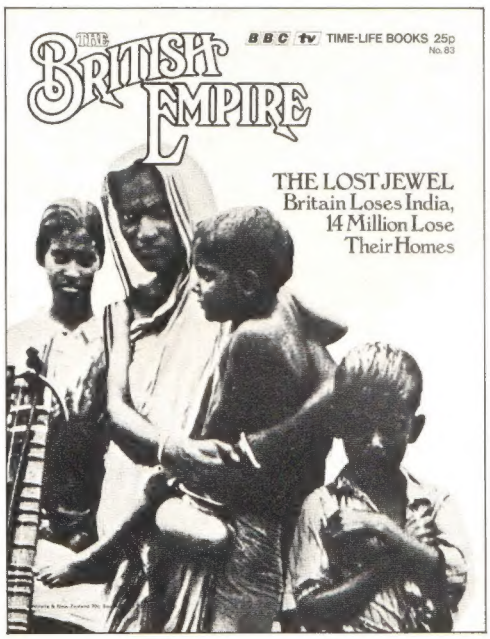

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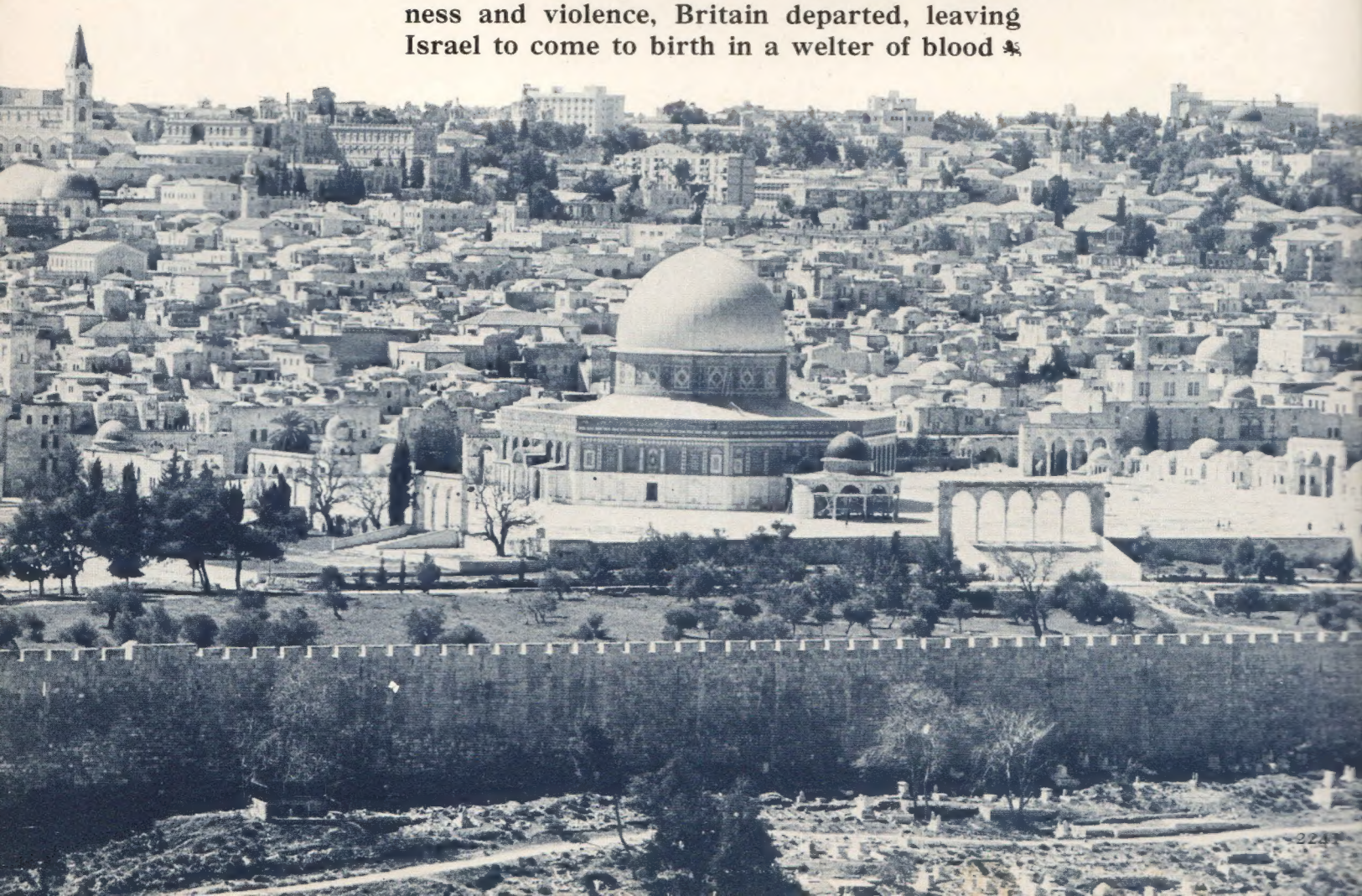
Cover: Refugees crowd the deck of the *Exodus*, one of the ships that in 1947 attempted to defy the British limitation on the number of Jewish immigrants.

PALESTINE BRITAIN'S CROWN OF THORNS

After Turkey's defeat in the First World War, several of her former territories were handed over to Britain as "mandates" to be reared for nationhood. One of these – Palestine – involved Britain in a tragic and intractable dilemma.

Here in a harsh land with a sparse but predominantly Arabic population, Jews had already begun the attempt to re-establish the Jewish nation destroyed and scattered 20 centuries before. Paradoxically, Britain had assumed obligations to both communities – a recipe for disaster. An influx of Jewish immigrants, eager to see Jerusalem (below) once again the capital of a Jewish nation, alienated the Arabs. British efforts to control the rush set Jew against Briton. After 30 years of mutual bitterness and violence, Britain departed, leaving Israel to come to birth in a welter of blood ❧



By Christopher Sykes

Palestine was never legally or technically a part of the British Empire, but from 1920 to 1948, when the State of Israel was established, it looked as if it was. During those years it was a Mandate, and the sovereign of Palestine was not the British King but the League of Nations and then, after the Second World War, the United Nations. Up to 1939 "the mandatory" (the British government) reported every year to the League.

The mandate system was devised by the Allies of the First World War at the Peace Conference of 1919. Its avowed purpose was to prepare politically inexperienced people for national independence and to rescue them from previous misrule. It was applied only to the colonial possessions of Germany in Africa, and the subject provinces of the Turkish Empire in Asia, which included the area of Palestine. An early proposal that the "mandated territories" should be ruled by Allied commissions was condemned as impracticable, and the powers who accepted mandate responsibilities were instructed by the League to rule alone in their territories.

Sceptics and enemies declared – and still declare – that the mandate system was a piece of imperialist cunning. But this view ignores the great measure of sincerity in the establishment of the mandate system. Proof of this came in 1931 when the British mandate in Iraq was withdrawn and replaced by a treaty between Great Britain and now-independent Iraq.

British rule had been instituted in Palestine with the conquest of Jerusalem in December, 1917. At the end of the First World War few British authorities foresaw any very great complications in the new undertaking despite the fact that assurances of support had been given to both Arab nationalists in the Middle East and Jewish nationalists – the Zionists – in England, encouraging them to work for a Jewish "national home" in Palestine. That there was some contradiction and, many alleged, a radical contradiction in British promises was apparent only to men on the spot. This does not mean that the British leaders were blind or stupid; it does mean that they were over-influenced by theory.

In the major documents conveying the British pledge to support Arab nationalism Palestine was not mentioned. There was good reason for this. Until 1920 there was no such political entity as Palestine for many hundreds of years. It was reasonably argued that without a nation you cannot have nationalism, and certainly not a nationalist problem. The area still called Palestine by outsiders was a conglomeration of Turkish provinces, without any unified authority. Furthermore this politically complex area was made yet more confused by the presence of large and influential minorities who enjoyed special privileges. The most ancient of these minorities was the Jewish one. However, through emigration, Turkish expulsions and a rise in the death-rate from disease during the war the number of Jews had sunk by 20,000, leaving about 60,000 in all by the time the British Army took on rule in Palestine. The little Jewish community represented less than 10 per cent of the Palestine population, most of whom were Arabic-speaking Muslims.

Chiefly under the influence of the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George, and the Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, the British government had added a further complication. It is known to history as the Balfour Declaration. It took the form of a letter written by Balfour on November 2, 1917, to Lord Rothschild, a Jewish financier and supporter of Zionism. It ran as follows:

"I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet:

'His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of

Theodor Herzl (right), driving force behind Jewish nationalism, convened the first Zionist Congress in Basle in 1897. Its aim to establish for Jews "a publicly and legally assured home in Palestine" was pressed at this and subsequent congresses, like the one held in 1903 (above). Herzl, as President, sits in the centre.

a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.'

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Balfour."

These now often quoted words made surprisingly little stir at the time. In the Commons it was the subject of some forgotten questions and answers. The French and U.S. governments had already accepted a pro-Zionist Allied policy with little argument, or perception of what it implied. Odder still, after some assurances that a Jewish State was not intended, the nominal leader of the Arabs in their wartime revolt against Turkey, Hussein, King of the Hejaz, was soon put at ease. Even odder, except for members of the Zionist party, the Jews of Europe and Asia were not greatly interested, and some of the loudest clamour (never very loud) against the Declaration came from British Jews who feared that it would force all Jews into divided loyalties.

Why did the British government make this declaration? No one has found a wholly satisfactory answer to that question. Contemporary documents show plainly enough that in the British military and political world there was a great desire to take Palestine into the British sphere of influence to counter the imperial ambitions of France in the Near East. Since the time of Napoleon, British governments had been obsessed with fears that a French establishment of power in the eastern Mediterranean would block the way to India, and the wartime alliance had not lessened British anxiety. This attitude, irrelevant as it was by 1918, was still to be found throughout all the British services, civil and military.

There was thus a readiness, especially in the lower echelons of government, to take Palestine into the British Empire, temporarily or permanently, by acting as the guardian of Zionism. The idea was less popular at ministerial level. Indeed, it was positively opposed by Arthur Balfour. He felt, though less strongly than his colleagues, the ancient British fear of a French base in the Near East. But if he was averse to a French régime in Palestine, he was equally averse to a British one. He wanted a Mandate for the country to be accepted by the United States, whose President, Woodrow Wilson, had so powerfully enunciated the principle of freedom for colonial subjects. Balfour tried hard for this at the Peace Conference of Paris, and at a meeting with President Wilson, Balfour found Wilson receptive. He assured Balfour that he shared his hopes and could get American acceptance. As hardly needs saying, things fell out differently.

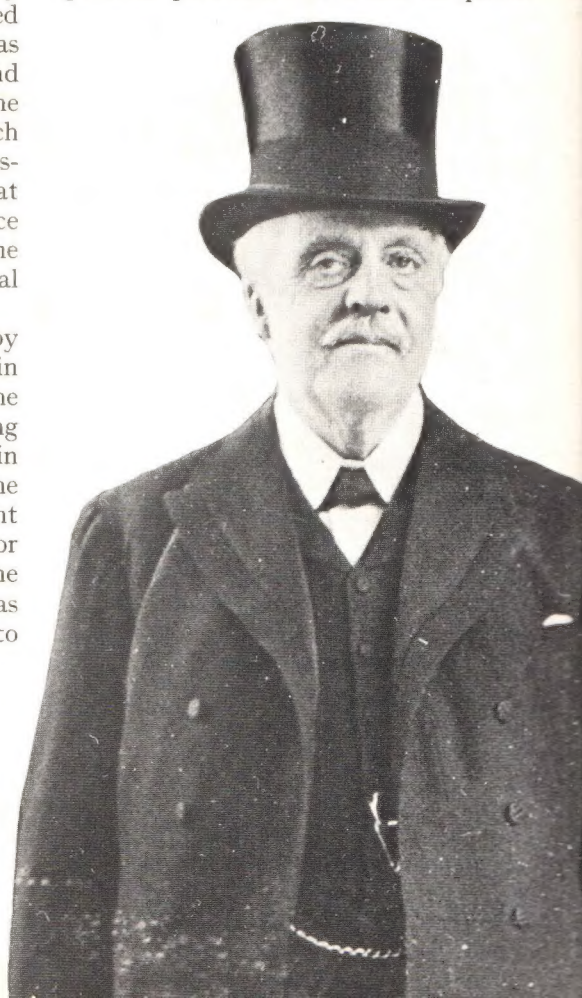
Of the reasons prompting those who organized the Declaration, only those of Balfour and the Zionist leadership can be known with certainty. Both were idealistic. Both believed that the establishment of a territorial national Jewish home would redeem the Jews from the habits of mind towards which centuries of ill-treatment had contributed. Balfour, Dr. Chaim Weizmann, the Zionist leader and other Zionists and sympathizers, took a rather exaggeratedly gloomy view of the effects of segregation and anti-Semitism on Jewish character. For example Balfour believed, and persuaded his colleagues in the government, that the Bolshevik party in Russia was Jewish. One fully attested reason why the Balfour Declaration was made when it was, lay in his hope and belief that it would, by holding out the promise of a Jewish homeland, detach Jews from Lenin, thus completely emasculating his party, with the result that Russia would remain with Britain, France and the U.S.A. as a combatant ally. One can hardly think of a greater political miscalculation.

The government were also alarmed by reliable reports that a political party in Germany was trying to influence the German government towards supporting the Zionist wish for a national home in Palestine. Dr. Weizmann warned the Foreign Office in 1917 that this might result in Zionists turning to Germany for support. The British government and the Zionists overlooked the fact that, as Turkey's ally, Germany was unable to embark on a Zionist policy.

To return to Palestine. From 1917 on the military régime, known as O.E.T.A. (Occupied Enemy Territory Administration) was in great difficulties. On O.E.T.A. fell the full weight of the contradictions in British policy. It was found that, though it was a perplexed and incoherent force, there was such a thing as Palestinian nationalism, in the sense that most Arabs of Palestine shared the ideas and emotions of the Arab national movement. The task of O.E.T.A. was not made easier by the presence of a Zionist Commission sent to Palestine to prepare the establishment of the Jewish homeland. The Commission had British government approval but was not welcomed by O.E.T.A.

The Zionist Commission needed to establish its rights and they thus could hardly help acting as a second and simultaneous government of Palestine. This activity, of course, stimulated Arab Palestinian nationalism yet further. Of the two political forces in the country, nascent Arab nationalism and nascent Jewish nationalism, O.E.T.A. found the former easier to deal with. The Arabs had a clear case, easy to understand sympathetically; the Zionists a somewhat sophisticated case, which was opposed by the conservative section of the Jewish population settled in the country.

O.E.T.A. had before it a formidable political problem, but it had no profes-



Arthur Balfour, the Foreign Secretary, in 1917 declared British support for the establishment of a "national home" for Jews – a vague phrase easily interpreted as firm support for an independent Israel.

sional politician of outstanding ability to give advice. Most staff had been casually collected from the demobilizing armies.

In these circumstances, it is not surprising to learn that O.E.T.A. made many mistakes. The most absurd was its suppression of the text of the Balfour Declaration in Palestine, in the hope that by this act of censorship it might come to be forgotten and tranquillity thus restored. As nearly every Jew and many Arabs had a copy, the hope was a peculiarly empty one.

As time went on, anti-Zionism increased in O.E.T.A. and most officials became openly pro-Arab. The reason was not far to seek. Palestinian Arabs of those days welcomed British rule because it was a great improvement on Turkish rule, and they trusted in O.E.T.A. as an effective shield against Jewish ambition.

The Zionist immigrants had welcomed British rule at first, believing that the Balfour Declaration guaranteed a 100 per cent pro-Zionist British administration. When they found that this was not so, and that the British administration interpreted its "sacred trust" as "an equality of obligation," they became disillusioned and distrustful. They had some reason for that distrust. Many politicians in Great Britain, mostly Conservatives, were working for a rescinding of the Balfour Declaration and they encouraged O.E.T.A. in their bias.

Lacking in experience, O.E.T.A. stumbled into bringing about the opposite of what the pro-Arab party sought. Exasperated at the continual meddling of the Zionist Commission, the O.E.T.A. chief, Lieutenant-General Sir Louis Bols, wrote to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, in April, 1920, asking for the Commission to be abolished. O.E.T.A. could not have timed its request more disadvantageously to themselves. Lord Curzon was at the time attending the Conference of San Remo with Lloyd George and Arthur Balfour. The last two were the strongest Zionists in the Cabinet. When Bols's despatch was forwarded to Curzon and he consulted them, they were both incensed at what they took to be Bols's incompetence, bias and disloyalty. In large part the Conference had been convened to discuss the partitioning of the former Turkish provinces in the Arabic-speaking world. With the approval of the Conference, the text of the Balfour Declaration was included in the terms of the Mandate for Palestine. The Liberal leader Sir Herbert (later Lord) Samuel, an eminent British Jew and a Zionist, accepted the post of first High Commissioner. O.E.T.A. was abolished. It was a great triumph for Zionism.

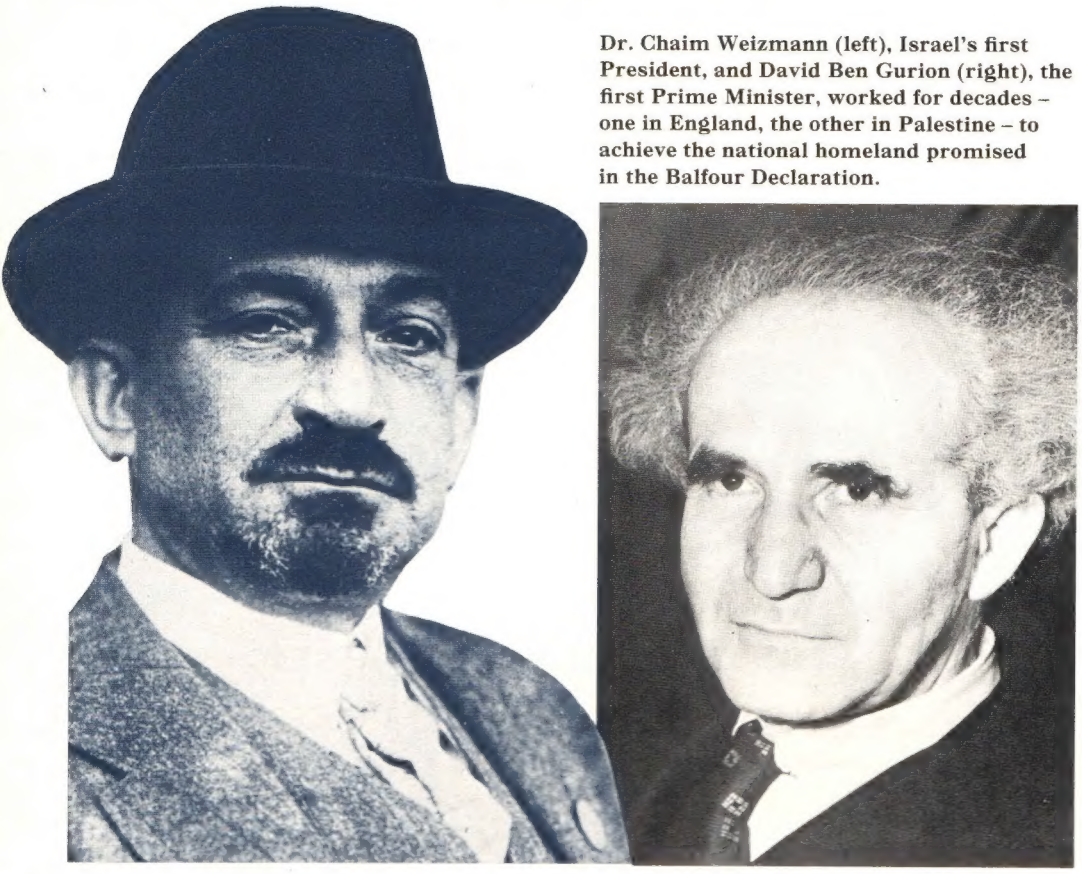
These decisions took effect on July 1, 1920, when Samuel arrived in Palestine. The Jews received him with acclaim and in the belief that the wrongs of many centuries would now be cancelled in the rebuilding of a Jewish State. The Arabs received him with gloom, dreading their swift reduction to servitude under new Jewish masters. Both soon found that they were mistaken. The most prominent feature in Samuel's character was fairness. He made his aims very clear to his Chief Secretary: "You know my policy with regard to the non-Jewish population – not only to treat them with absolute justice and every consideration for their interests in matters relating to the establishment of the Jewish National Home, but also to adopt active measures to promote their well-being." Samuel wanted an equitable adjustment of Jewish and Arab claims on a basis of adequate representation. He remained loyal to a moderate Zionism which took no account of Jewish statehood in the foreseeable future. This fairness was of little if any interest to Jews or Arabs. The former wanted not fairness but the New Jerusalem; the latter did not want to be fair to the Jews, but to expel them. Only an extremely able man, as Samuel undoubtedly was, could have survived the unpopularity which his attitude brought on him from both sides.

Almost immediately Samuel ran into serious trouble that was not resolved till March, 1921. It began in the north where King Hussein's second son, Feisal, had been made King of "United Syria," comprising modern Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine, the area at the time being divided between British and French administrations. His capital was Damascus in French mandated Syria. His position was only tenable if he maintained good relations with the French Mandatory power, but whenever he attempted to do this, his subjects accused him of being no more than a French pawn, and so he was forced into anti-French attitudes.

His only champion among the great powers was Britain who felt an obligation towards him for his part in the Arab Revolt in the war. But his nationalist ministers forced him into courses which lost him this support. He was manœuvred into giving reluctant approval to murderous Syrian attacks on Zionist settlements in Palestine and in 1920 aided an uprising against the British in Iraq. He was then further manœuvred into anti-Zionist resolutions which became his official policy.

Feisal's anti-Zionist activity was particularly culpable, for in 1918 he had signed an agreement with Dr. Weizmann that was hailed then – and by some is still hailed – as a noble act of state which could have led to a lasting Arab-Zionist accord. A helpless puppet in the hands of his ministers and advisers, Feisal was ultimately pushed into directly challenging the French Army. By July, 1920, he had lost all his allies and the allegiance of most of his subjects. With needless

Haj Amin Hussein, the Mufti of Jerusalem, kindled Arab nationalism, urging a Holy War against the Jews and the end of co-operation with the "infidel" British.



Dr. Chaim Weizmann (left), Israel's first President, and David Ben Gurion (right), the first Prime Minister, worked for decades – one in England, the other in Palestine – to achieve the national homeland promised in the Balfour Declaration.

cruelty, the French flung him out.

The situation was made all the more complicated by the fact that the British Mandate included the territory east of the Jordan, which now forms the State of Jordan. Before his ejection in July, 1920, Feisal, as the King of United Syria, had held a shadowy rule over this territory, unlike his merely theoretical rule over Palestine. Tactfully, Feisal's trans-Jordan rule had not been officially questioned or disapproved by the British government or the Mandatory. With Feisal's fall, however, the matter needed close examination.

Suddenly the inhabitants of this trans-Jordan area found themselves without their Chief of State and they hastened to establish new authority. There followed one of the curiosities of history, one that has been very little remarked. The area broke up into autonomous sheikdoms, one of which was "The National Government of Moab" under the Presidency of the local British official, Alec Kirkbride. Moab even minted its own coinage.

Sir Herbert Samuel wisely waited on events. He issued no instructions, for which he was blamed at the time but was blessed after. He left the initiative to the local rulers, of whom Kirkbride was the most influential. Events soon challenged the little trans-Jordan republics. In January, 1921, Feisal's elder brother, the Emir Abdullah, appeared on the southern frontiers of Palestine at the head of a small army and declared his intention to march to Damascus to expel the French.

Abdullah was not a warlike man and he was easily dissuaded from his revengeful intentions, especially after he had been acclaimed as their ruler by the little republics who were by now conscious of isolation in a dangerous world. By public consent and with Britain's tacit blessing, Abdullah became Emir of Transjordan.

After the San Remo Conference British responsibility for the Palestine Mandate passed from the Foreign Office to the Colonial Office, then under Winston Churchill. Unlike his predecessors of the Foreign Office, Churchill had had no part in the original negotiations leading to the existing position in Palestine, and he could start afresh. Without much hope of success he and Samuel urged on all parties the desirability of an elected legislative council and the erection of a constitution which would replace the High Commission's arbitrary rule.

With their long association with liberalism, the Jews accepted the proposition though they saw the considerable danger to themselves. With inconceivable folly, the Arabs rejected the institution of a legislative council so effectively that in the first part of 1922 the High Commission had to abandon the whole enterprise (though the idea was briefly raised again several times later).

The Arab argument was that by taking part in the elections they would be forced to admit the legality of the Balfour Declaration and of the Zionist endeavour in Palestine. This was quite true. What they overlooked, and continued to overlook until it was too late, was that by co-operating in a council and making it work they would have had the Zionists at a permanent disadvantage through holding a permanent working majority unless (as was most improbable) the "official members," that is members appointed by the High Commissioner, were to vote regularly and unanimously with the Zionists. The Arabs underestimated the sympathy they enjoyed within the administration. And it is in fact hard to see how, if the council had been accepted by the Arabs, a State of Israel could ever have come into being. But the parliamentary game has never suited Arab temperaments and they preferred to go a more heroical and, as it turned out, a suicidal way. Much blame attaches to the British politicians and publicists in England who encouraged the Arabs in these foolish courses.

From 1921 to 1929 there was peace in Palestine: difficult, often broken peace, but peace nevertheless. The credit is largely due to the very remarkable characters of the first two High Commissioners. Unpopular as Samuel was with Jewish and Arab politicians, he commanded respect, and the honesty and generosity of his whole approach to his impossibly difficult task was apparent to everyone in Palestine. His successor in 1925 was Field-Marshal Lord Plumer, dissimilar from Samuel in all superficial respects, but his equal in uprightness and determination.

He was the typical British senior officer of his time. He wore large white moustaches and was severely correct in the discharge of his official duties. This disguised his acute political sense. When asked what was his policy, he replied in his sharpest military manner: "I have no policy. I am here to carry out that of His Majesty's Government." He looked unintelligent but had much perception. He looked a martinet, but he was tolerant, with a broad sense of humour.

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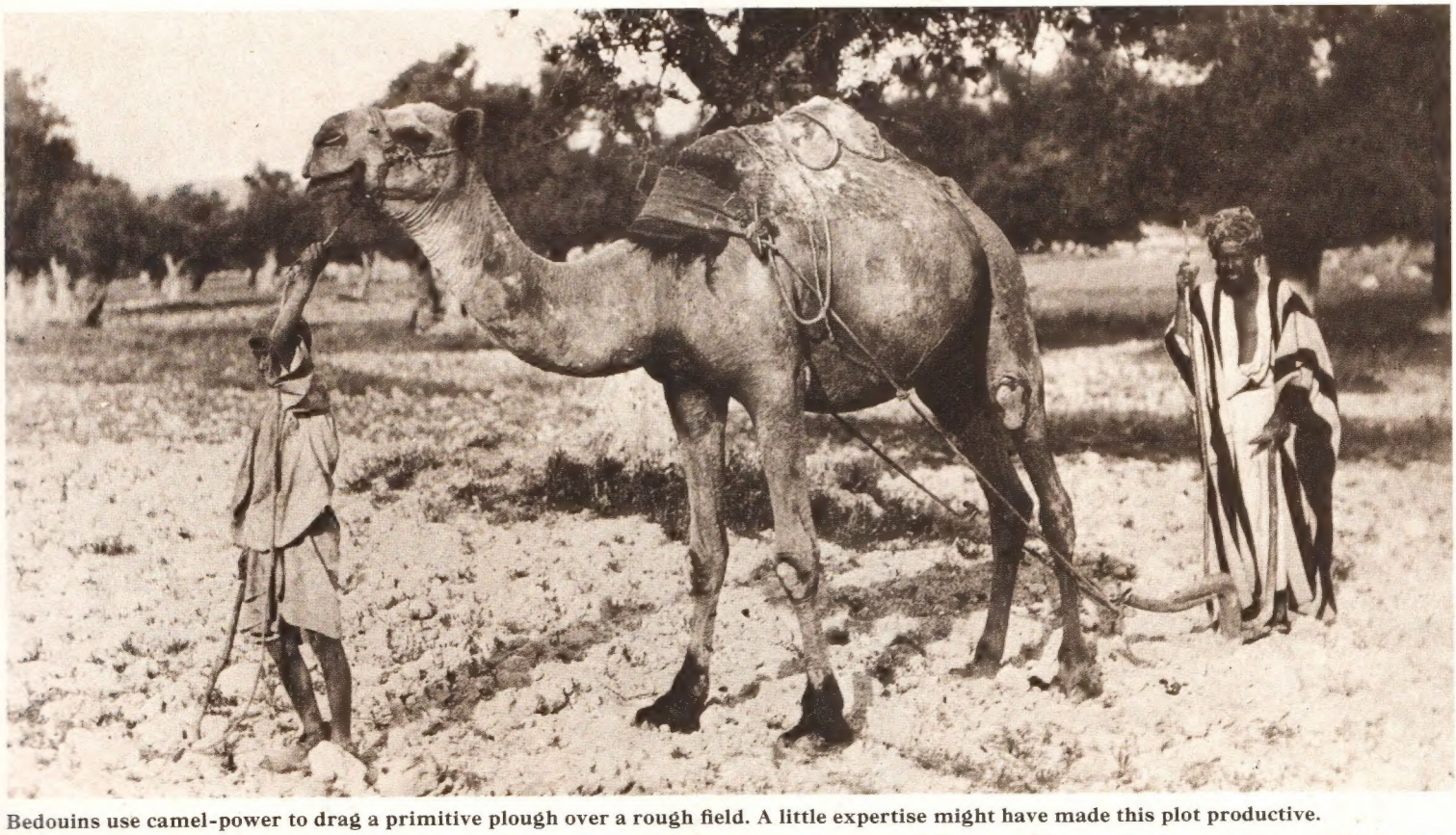
ONE LAND TWO WORLDS

In a Biblical scene, an Arab herdsman tends his flock, much as his Palestinian forefathers had done for centuries.



Bedouins use camel-power to drag a primitive plough over a rough field. A little expertise might have made this plot productive.

For Jewish immigrants to Palestine, the return from the "diaspora" – the "scattering" of Jews round the world – meant quite literally a return to sacred soil. By 1914, 85,000 of them had arrived to redeem their ancient homeland. Grouped in dedicated co-operative settlements (*kibbutzim*), they began to make the desert bloom, while their 500,000 Arab neighbours, mostly herders and subsistence farmers, looked on with growing envy and hatred.

Workers farm a *kibbutz* in 1929 – a romantic photograph reflecting the aura of sanctity with which Jewish immigrants invested their work.

Pioneer Jews epitomize the ruggedness that by 1935 had raised the productivity of Jewish workers to three times that of local Arabs.

Rubble litters a Jewish hospital in Hebron, after an Arab bomb attack in 1929, during the first outbreak of large-scale Arab-Jewish violence in Palestine.

Plumer was received joyfully by the Arabs and with gloom by the Jews. Both communities regarded his appointment as a return by the British government to the pro-Arab policy of O.E.T.A. As with Samuel, both were wholly mistaken. Like his predecessor, Plumer was dedicated to the principle of fair dealing, but, unlike Samuel, who was somewhat aloof in manner, this companionable military commander was popular both with Arabs and Jews and is still remembered with affection by older people in former Palestine and Transjordan.

Plumer was not a natural Zionist or a natural Judeophil. But he had an instinctive admiration for courage and hardihood, and he recognized this in Zionism in Palestine. This does not mean, however, that he was an opponent of the Arab parties of whom it may be said he took a far too optimistic view. Seeing that under his rule there had been no great disorders he mistakenly recommended a reduction in the size of British units. He reckoned without Haj Amin Hussein, an instigator of anti-Jewish and anti-British riots, whom Sir Herbert Samuel, with typical generosity had not only amnestied but had recommended as the Mufti of Jerusalem, a post to which that secretive, crafty, persuasive, evil-minded man was immediately appointed.

Lord Plumer, suddenly overcome by ill-health, asked to be relieved of his post in 1928. He left Palestine in the summer. His farewell audience with the main Arab delegation was of some historic importance. By this time the majority of Arab politicians recognized that in refusing a legislative council in 1922 they had made a serious blunder. At this audience they formally requested the formation of such a body. Lord Plumer duly conveyed the request to the British government.

Not long after Plumer's departure the peace began to break down. It began in one of those foolish religious quarrels about conflicting ceremonies that have often disgraced the Holy City. This time the trouble was between Muslims and Jews, and the Muslims appear to have acted as aggressors throughout. But the trouble was not widespread, and the new High Commissioner, Sir John Chancellor, could hope that with patience and goodwill it would pass.

Chancellor was a man of great administrative ability and successfully inaugurated the construction of the harbour at Haifa along with other valuable industrial and economic undertakings. He also reopened negotiations for the establishment of a legislative council. Unfortunately he was without the political flair of his predecessors.

In 1929 the peace really broke down in general and hideous fashion. The religious quarrel was still going on in Jerusalem, but what caused the outbreak cannot be said for certain. It was probably the consequence of several factors. The 16th Zionist Congress, which announced the establishment of a world-wide Jewish Agency to represent Jewish interests in Palestine, met in Zürich in August, 1929. The extremist leader, Vladimir Jabotinsky, took the occasion to make bellicose speeches. He spoke of an immediate Jewish State in Palestine, of "great colonizing masses" of Zionists founding a Jewish Empire "on either side of the Jordan." He derided any Zionist policy that aimed at the conciliation of Arabs. His ferocious utterances naturally alarmed Arabs, at a moment when the tide of destiny was perceptibly turning and, after a serious economic setback, the Jewish National Home showed signs of revival. Jabotinsky had numerous followers in Palestine, and in the manner of extremists they demonstrated. Arabs thereupon organized frequent, provocative and insulting counter-demonstrations in Jerusalem. These are the usually accepted causes of the disorders of 1929. Anyone who has studied the evidence, however, cannot resist suspecting another likely one: the intrigues of the Mufti.

Such suspicions were entertained by the Palestine Police at the time, but in the absence of proof their views made no impression on the later Commission of Inquiry who accepted the Mufti's protestations of innocence.

The atrocities of the 1929 rising were appalling. It was now that Plumer's misjudgement in reducing the military and police forces became evident. It required three days for British reinforcements to arrive from Egypt, and those three days were fatal. In the last week of August mass Arab attacks on Jews spread throughout the whole country. Several Jewish settlements were laid waste between Jerusalem and Haifa and in the south. The most horrible of the atrocities took place at Hebron where 60 Jews, including children, were murdered, and at Safed in the north where 23 were murdered. The lightly armed Administration was hampered by the fact that Muslim policemen often refused to take action against Muslim rioters. In all, 133 Jews were killed and 399 wounded. A rather lower figure for Arab casualties was returned but with a great difference: all the Jewish casualties were due to Arab action, all the Arab ones (excepting six) to British police or military action. It is clear that the Arabs were the aggressors.

The High Commissioner was absent in London when these events occurred. Filled with indignation he issued a manifesto during his swift journey back, denouncing the Arab leadership for the abominable crimes of the last week of August and breaking off the negotiations for the establishment of a legislative council. He wrote in passionate wrath, but without proof. The Arab leadership, defective in understanding but never in cunning, protested. Chancellor was forced to retract. He assured the Arab leaders that the matter would be submitted to a Commission that would adjudge the responsibilities of both sides. This expression of British fairness did not delight the Jews of Palestine, for the victims were put on the same level as their murderers. The Arabs were not much appeased. Like Samuel, Chancellor innocently incurred the hatred of both sides.

The Zionists were in an unfortunate position. Though the High Commissioner was sympathetic he had been manœuvred into taking a cruelly aloof attitude towards them in a bitter moment. Even worse for them, the new Socialist Colonial Minister, Lord Passfield, better known as Sydney Webb, was clearly anti-Zionist.

Sydney Webb, with his wife Beatrice Webb the sociologist, belonged to an old-fashioned continental type of socialism that looked with suspicion on Jewish big business, organizations that undoubtedly supported much of the Zionist effort. In addition, the Webbs had little regard for the rights of small nations. They looked

on the very existence of small nations as mischievously reactionary and a hindrance to true socialism. In the idea of a National Home they detected a small nation in the making.

Passfield was keen to revive the idea of a multilateral legislative assembly. The Zionists had not opposed this in 1928 and they did not oppose it now. It was the cause of much anxiety to them, but they need not have worried. In December, 1930, the government invited the Zionists and the Arab leadership to a Round Table Conference on the subject. The initiative had come from Dr. Weizmann, for which reason, perhaps, the Arabs decided to boycott the Conference. Thus the constitutional issue lapsed for six more vital years, during which Hitler came to power and Jewish immigration into Palestine increased enormously. The Arabs had thrown away their advantage for ever.

After the events of 1929 there was an uneasy peace in Palestine once more. In July, 1931, Sir John Chancellor resigned and he was succeeded in November by Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Wauchope who remained as High Commissioner till February, 1938. Wauchope was little known outside the army but among his acquaintances he enjoyed a high and deserved reputation as a cultivated man of ability. He was generous and public-spirited. He was a bachelor and spent a large part of his private fortune on public benefactions in Palestine. It was hoped that under him Palestine would enjoy a repeat performance of the happy Plumer episode. These hopes were swiftly dashed not through his fault but that of the ghastly times in which he lived.

The cause of distress here as elsewhere was the rise to power of Adolf Hitler. This obvious fact has to be emphasized, as Zionist propaganda has made strenuous and largely successful efforts to persuade the world that the woes of Palestine were exclusively due to British anti-Semitism. This is factional nonsense. The would-be destroyer of civilization was Adolf Hitler not the inadequate Stanley Baldwin.

Jewish immigration into Palestine, which in spite of some recent increase had continued to be a matter for Zionist disappointment, changed character after 1932 and became the cause for new anxieties and redirections of policy. From 1929 to 1932, emigration had averaged 4,000 or 5,000 a year. Then as the menace of Hitler and Nazism became apparent, the figures shot up. In 1933 over 30,000 Jews entered Palestine; in 1934 there were 42,359 immigrants, the greatest number hitherto recorded; yet in 1935 this figure was surpassed by one of 61,854. Inevitably this radical change in the population figures affected the Arab nationalist elements in the country. Inevitably, too, the immigration in three years of over 134,500 had given rise to mass disorders and would give rise to more.

The Mandatory authorities on the spot deserve praise for urging, against many warnings and anti-British rioting, that in their desperate need Jews should be allowed to take full advantage of the regulations, but the British government who agreed to this deserves less credit. It was clear that Palestine alone could not solve the problem caused by Hitler's anti-Jewish mania. The only way to relieve the strain on Palestine was to open doors elsewhere, and Great Britain could in fact have absorbed the whole German Jewish population. But to allow any large foreign immigration would not have been a popular move; it might add to the already

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THE FIRST BLOWS

With Hitler's rise, the Jewish National Home strode towards statehood. Between 1933 and 1936, more than 134,500 refugees from Nazism poured into Palestine carrying visas from Britain. Thousands more entered illegally. To Arab nationalists, the influx was intolerable. They demanded that Britain end immigration entirely. Britain went no further than to reduce the number of visas; but illegal entries swelled.

For years, both Jews and Arabs had agitated for self-government. Now Westminster tried to evolve a representative council which would please both sides. It satisfied neither. While London debated, the Arabs called a national strike. In April, 1936, Muslim insurgents began to attack Jews, Englishmen and fellow-Muslims who refused to join them. They uprooted orange grooves, wrecked roads and railways and slashed the oil pipeline to Haifa. By October, when the violence came to an end, 305 people had been killed and over 1,000 injured.

British troops fire on insurgents in the Old City of Jerusalem.

In Jaffa, the British use dynamite to wipe out Arab strongholds.

British remove rocks placed by rebels to slow traffic for snipers.

Jewish settlers fight a blaze in a wheat-field started by Arab saboteurs dedicated to destroying Jewish property.

A baton party of British policemen try to disperse a mob of frenzied Arab rioters clamouring against a policy they consider pro-Zionist.

large unemployment figures and would be resented by many trades unions. The British authorities never sent Jewish refugees back to Germany, but they made no public move. The lethargic Baldwin always preferred to do the minimum. The burden continued to fall on Palestine; the number of immigration visas was cut; illegal immigration increased. Britain could certainly have done much more.

The expected major trouble broke out in 1936. An immediate cause was the constitutional issue. Through 1935 Sir Arthur Wauchope doggedly pursued the goal of a legislative council, and the Arab leaders, of whom the Mufti was now openly the chief, realized that their previous rejections had made them the only Arab community in Asia without independence or a representative chamber. They accepted Wauchope's invitation in principle. But this time the Zionists emphatically rejected it. They cannot be blamed, but they acted with remarkable ineptitude, claiming that a council "would merely serve as an instrument for . . . spreading anti-Zionist propaganda and intensifying racial strife." Such an argument flatly contradicted all former statements on the subject by the Zionist leadership, and inevitably drew ill-will and suspicion.

Undismayed Wauchope continued to hold out the offer, but the issue was shelved with the outbreak on April 18, 1936, of the Arab Rebellion.

With terrible casualties (the highest being Arabs killed by rebels as collaborationists) the rising continued till October, 1936, after which the British government promised a Royal Commission to inquire into the causes of unrest.

The Commission was led by Lord Peel and had a distinguished membership. Although it failed in its attempt to find a solution, as all these commissions did, it is historically important because it ultimately influenced events. Its main recommendation was for a partition of Palestine into Jewish-ruled and Arab-ruled areas.

The idea received unintentional support from the attitudes of the two sides. Though the Jews had already somewhat weakened their case by absurd propaganda (such as when an eminent lawyer tried to prove that the term "non-Jewish communities" in the Balfour Declaration did not refer to the Muslim Arab inhabitants) they gave the scheme a wary acceptance, and thus proved themselves pliable and moderate. But the Mufti and his party made the rashest Jewish witness seem reasonable. The Mufti himself insisted that Turkish rule had been humaner and more freedom-loving than the British, and he tried to scare the Commissioners with melodramatic tales of lurid conspiracies organized by Rabbis in the Balkans to seize Muslim shrines. The chief Arab apologist, George Antonius, tried to persuade Lord Peel that the Arabs suffered a profound sense of injustice from the disintegration of United Syria which everyone, Jew and Arab, had long forgotten. The lasting impression was of fanaticism against reason.

Before submission to the League of Nations, the Peel recommendations needed to be approved by the Houses of Parliament. The Commissioners included no member of either House except Peel himself who was ill and nearing the end of his life. He defended his work feebly, as did the government. The man who killed the recommendations was Lord Samuel who was listened to as a former High Commissioner. In a brilliant speech in the

Lords he pointed out the disconcerting fact that in a time of peace it is literally impossible to move populations except by force and with an accompaniment of cruelty which would revolt national and world opinion and that the Jewish population of Palestine was not concentrated or large enough for the proposed partition to be put viably into effect by other means. His argument proved irresistible. The government gradually put Lord Peel's proposals aside. When they were rejected by the League of Nations in August, the British Government did not contest the verdict.

In the summer of 1937 the Arab Rebellion flared up again in response to the agitation of the politicians who were alarmed by what seemed the pro-Zionist bias of the Peel Report, and were too ignorant to take note of its political failure. In October, Arab terrorists murdered Lewis Andrews, the District Commissioner of Nazareth. The Rebellion persisted for two years. In February, 1938, Wauchope was succeeded by Sir Harold MacMichael who had served successfully in the Sudan as a Colonial Governor, but who proved ill-suited to the Palestine High Commission.

Two events of 1938 should be remembered. A young Scots officer in the British Army, Orde Wingate, got permission from the Palestine Military Commander, Sir Archibald Wavell, to raise small units, recruited from Jews and officered by British, to counter-attack Arab guerrillas who were attacking Jews at night. Wingate called them the Special Night Squads. They first went into action in June, 1938, and they operated successfully till the summer of 1939 when they were disbanded. The S.N.S. gave the Jews, restless under the official Zionist policy of "self-restraint," a new self-confidence.

The other event was a melancholy fiasco. Appalled by the suffering of the Jews in Europe, President Roosevelt invited the non-Fascist world to an international conference held at Evian in July, 1938. Thirty-one countries sent delegates. With the sole exception of the Dominican Republic, which offered asylum to 100,000 Jews, the countries represented contented themselves with edifying speeches and no new action. The main load remained on Palestine alone.

Early in 1939 Neville Chamberlain and his Colonial Secretary, Malcolm Macdonald, summoned a Palestine conference in London which was attended by an Arab and a Jewish delegation, and delegations from the Arabic-speaking world Since the Arabs refused to meet the Jews it was held as two conferences: Anglo-Arab and Anglo-Jewish. (The Mufti, suspected of complicity in the murder of Andrews, had fled Palestine and was absent.) Though the army was slowly mastering the Arab Rebellion, the Palestine Arabs were in a strong position. The neighbouring Arab countries had grown interested in Zionism after 1935, and some of them were large suppliers of oil, which would be needed in the coming war. The Jews had no oil. It would have been madness for a British government in 1939 to open a serious quarrel with the Arabs.

Still believing that reason would prevail if only there could be frank discus-

In the years between the wars, Jews – like the new arrivals from America on the left – determinedly broke new ground for *kibbutzim* and began the task of educating a generation that knew no other homeland than Palestine (right).

sion, the government hoped vainly that they would not have to be cruel to the Jews. (There could be little frank discussion with the Arab delegates because they feared that any concessions would bring on them the murderous wrath of the Mufti.) Faith and Hope the government had; they found it impossible to practise Charity and after the abortive conference they imposed their own solution in what all Zionists call "the infamous White Paper" of May, 1939.

It was a milder version of a proposal later withdrawn) by Lord Passfield in 1930, but now it had an effect unknown in Passfield's day: it distressed not only the Zionist party but all Jews, especially in the English-speaking world. What most exasperated opponents was the rigid limit set on Jewish immigration. They amounted to this: 10,000 Jewish immigrants a year for the next five years, with an additional immediate immigration of 25,000. Later immigrations would be with Arab agreement, and this meant none. The proposed figures, great by former standards, were minute in contrast with the numbers victimized by Nazi Germany and her anti-Semitic followers elsewhere. It was psychologically impossible for a Jew to accept the White Paper of 1939.

The Jews were in a helpless position. They protested vigorously and when the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations rejected the White Paper in June, 1939, the Jews declared it illegal. (In fact only the League Council, which was never called again, could veto a Mandatory's decision). But the Jews could do no more than protest, for it was also psychologically impossible for them to take the anti-British side in the manifestly approaching war with Germany. The Arabs, who had no such inhibitions and who tended to look with admiration on Hitler, also protested against what they held to be a British surrender to Zionism, but their indignation may have been less sincere. For in fact the White Paper achieved its immediate political aim. The incentive to the Rebellion weakened and it slowly ceased. Oil supplies to the Middle East Command from Arab areas were not interrupted during the Second World War. But the dubious morality of this appeasement had later to be paid for by the British.

Early in the war, in 1940, the Palestine Administration and the government of Winston Churchill came into sharp disagreement. Dr. Weizmann and the Zionist leaders wanted above all things to form a Jewish army to fight Nazism. Churchill was in full sympathy with them as were several of his colleagues including the Colonial Secretary, Lord Lloyd. Sir Harold MacMichael, backed by the Commander-in-Chief Middle East, Sir Archibald Wavell, vigorously opposed the proposition, for they believed that the Zionists would use such an army for political ends. Against the High Commission and Wavell and his successors Churchill battled in vain.

After numerous attempts and disappointments the Zionists obtained official sanction – but not till the end of 1944 – only for a Jewish Brigade Group which went into action under its own standards bearing the Star of David. However, most Palestine Jews who fought in the war took the simple course of joining the British Army, and their numbers and records in this regard were high. In the Middle East Command these numbers included a larger proportion than was then suspected of men under secret Zionist orders. But their existence was often discovered and explains in some part the objections of the Mandatory to encouraging a Jewish army.

But the Jewish army, though a burning issue, burned less ferociously than the difference between the British and the Zionists over the question of Jewish immigration into Palestine. Zionist propaganda painted throughout the Second World War and after a horrific picture of brutal British imperialists turning back helpless Jewish immigrants and handing them back to their persecutors. The facts suggest other interpretations of events.

Before the war the High Commission committed an act of gross insensitivity Three boats, filled with Jewish refugees whose passports had false immigration visas supplied by the Gestapo, arrived in

Arabs and Jews march side by side in Palestine during the Second World War. They sank political and religious differences to join up in large numbers.

Palestine during March and April, 1939. They were sent back to their port of embarkation. This cruel action produced a storm of rage in the House of Commons, and the government found itself in danger. Zionist propagandists (notably the writer Arthur Koestler) insist that there was repetition of such incidents throughout the war, but they give no names of boats after April, 1939. In fact there are no recorded cases of this kind after April, but British policy remained repugnant to the Jewish Agency none the less.

The new Mandatory policy was to receive Jewish immigrants only up to the White Paper quota, from which the number (never large) of known illegal immigrants was harshly deducted. Further immigrants were not sent back but given asylum in British overseas territory.

The Jewish Agency wanted a Zionist solution of the refugee problem, and was not interested in others. This led to the tragedy of the S.S. *Patria* in November, 1940. Some 1,800 refugees were in the course of being transferred from three hulks anchored in Haifa to the French boat *Patria* with a view to their shipment to Mauritius. The Jewish Agency arranged for saboteurs to put the engines out of working order, but a miscalculation with the explosives resulted in the sinking of the ship and the death of over 250 people. The Jewish Agency then represented the disaster as an act of mass-suicide. The survivors from the *Patria* itself were allowed to remain in Palestine, a fact not always mentioned by Zionist writers. The rest were sent to the island of Mauritius where the climate is agreeable and the death rate was low, another rarely mentioned fact. They were warned that they would not be authorized to return to Palestine, but in fact many of them did return while Lord Gort was High Commissioner, another fact seldom mentioned.

Another ship, the *Struma*, holding 769 refugees reached Istanbul in December. The Turks refused asylum. The Jewish Agency insisted that visas for Palestine, and no other sort of visa, should be issued to the refugees. They were not interested in propositions that the refugees should be sent to Cyprus, Mauritius, Egypt, the Sudan, or elsewhere in Africa and the East where the British had authority to settle them temporarily. It was to be Palestine or nothing. MacMichael, the High Commissioner, refused, then relented, agreeing to Palestine visas for those between 11 and 18. Before this decision reached the refugees the *Struma* in February, 1942, was towed into the Black Sea where it blew up and sank. It may have struck a mine. There was only one survivor.

MacMichael incurred blame through his weakness. Like his uncle, Lord Curzon, he had the manners and obstinacy of a strong man, but in times of crisis could be irresolute and afraid. One may wonder why he did not act strenuously on his own, independently of the Jewish Agency, and thus save these wretched people.

By the end of 1942 boatloads of refugees had become rare. Hitler's "Final Solution" – the wholesale execution of millions of Jews – was in full operation. Gestapo aid to refugees in the earlier phase, furnishing them with false visas, etc., may puzzle some readers. It was partly due to bribery, and mostly due to a policy aimed at confusing British rule in Palestine. In 1942 German policy became less devious, and the "Final Solution" aimed simply at the ultimate finalty – extermination ✠

David Ben Gurion, then Chairman of the Jewish Agency which handled Zionist affairs under the Mandate, shakes hands with the British High Commissioner, Lord Gort, in 1944.

RETURN FROM DIASPORA

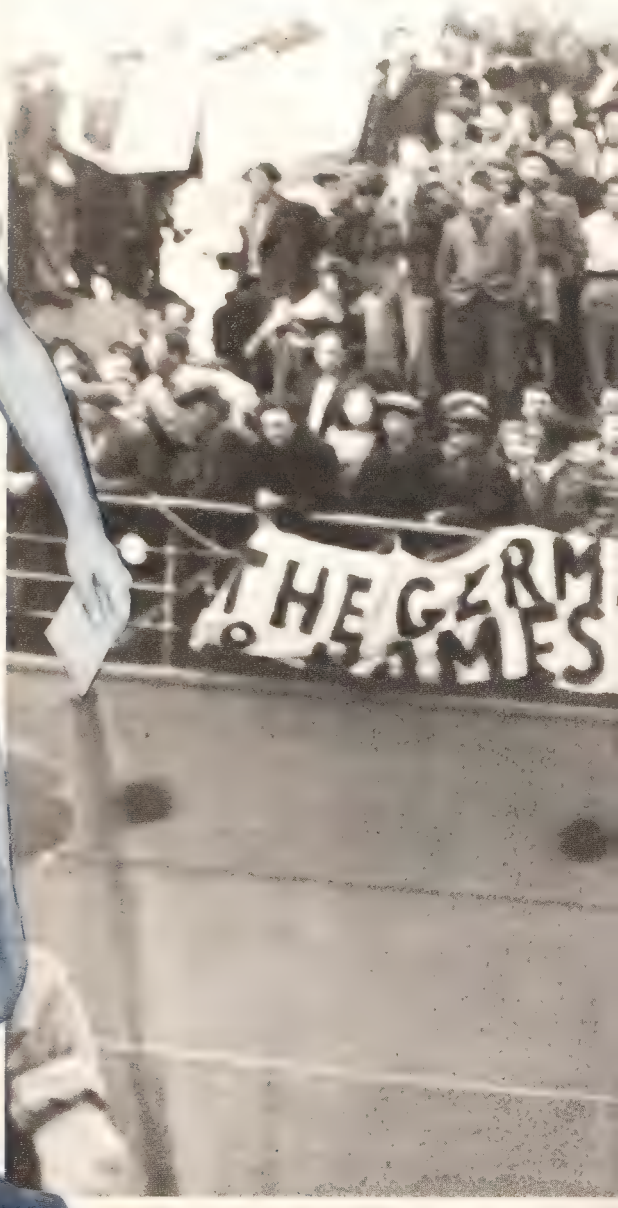
After Hitler's attempt to achieve the "Final Solution" to the "Jewish problem" through extermination, European Jews were convinced that their only hope for a secure future would lie within the borders of their own, independent state. In 1945, therefore, the return from "diaspora" – the dispersal of the Jews by the Romans 1,800 years before – began with renewed desperation.

The British, however, aware of the effect large-scale immigration would have on local Arab feeling, refused to admit more than a trickle of immigrants and set the Navy to blockade the shores of Palestine. To Zionists, this was both inhuman and a betrayal of the terms of the British mandate. They determined to secure their ends illegally. With American support, European Jews acquired ships, crammed them with would-be immigrants and challenged the blockade.

Superficially, the campaign was a failure – only five out of 63 vessels got through – but in terms of publicity for the Zionist cause it was a huge success. One case, that of the *Exodus*, whose immigrant cargo was sent back to Germany after the vessel was intercepted, acquired special fame. The story, exploited to the full, was retold in book form and then as a film. It became a symbol of the Jews' struggle to build their new nation.

Refugees scramble to reach the shore from a ship grounde

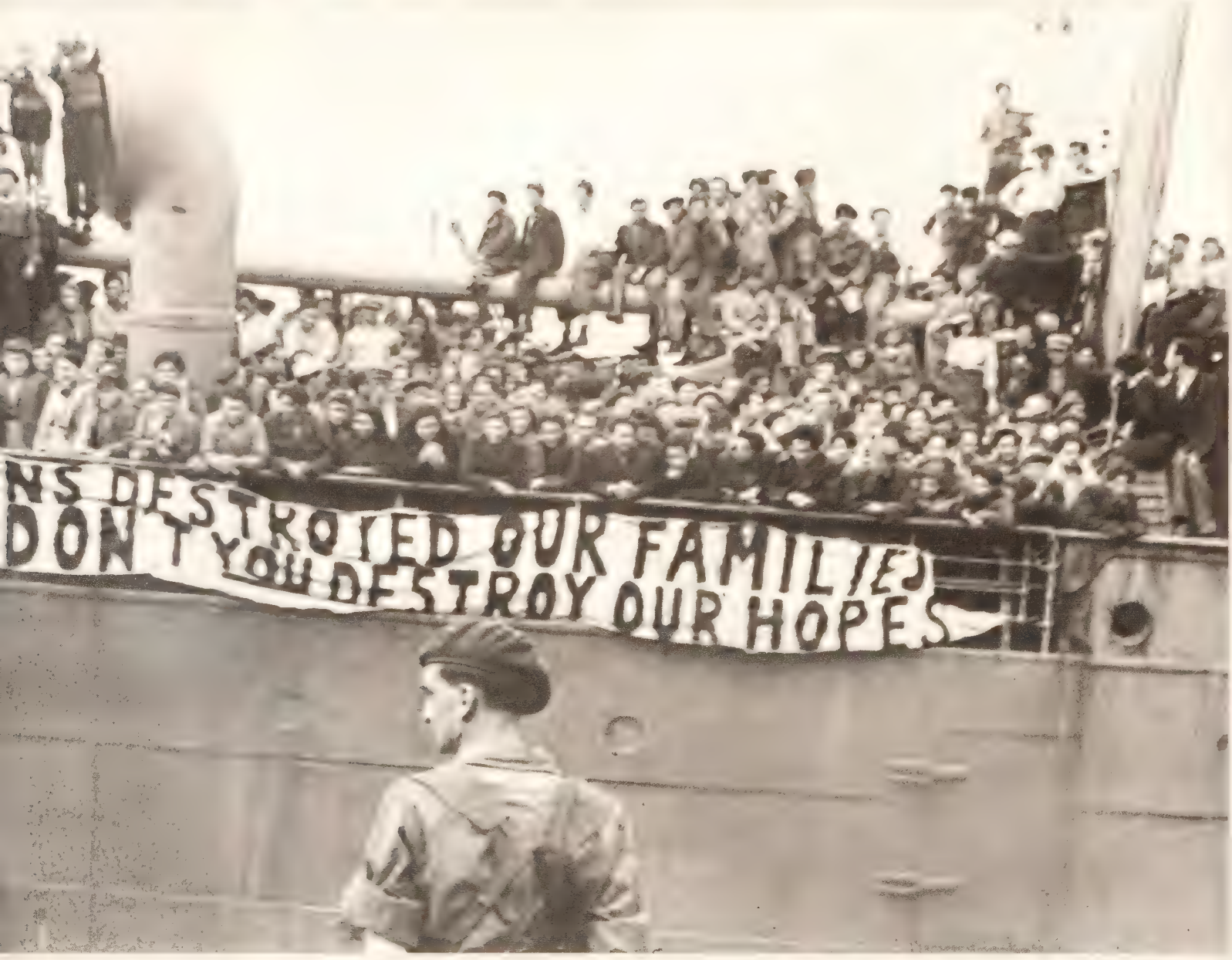
Invalids from a seized ship are led off to be transhipped.



The *Theodor Herzl*, like many other Zionis

fter evading British capture.

Exodus 1947, heavy-laden with 4,500 Jews, was turned back at Haifa and forced to sail to British-held Hamburg.



escue vessels, bore crudely lettered streamers carrying bitter slogans which equated British actions with the anti-Semitic atrocities of Nazi Germany.

The Blast of Bombs

Although Palestine Jews fought for Britain in the Second World War, they knew that to make the Promised Land theirs, they must fight with equal zeal against British immigration restrictions.

Two terrorist groups, the Irgun and the Stern Gang, took it upon themselves to attack and murder British officials. At first, Haganah, the defence force created in the 1920s to stave off Arab attacks, believed that terrorism could only harm the Zionist cause, and helped the British try to crush the extremists. But when at the war's end Britain still made no move to fulfil Zionist dreams, Haganah, too, defied her with violence.

One incident in particular raised terrorism to a new level. On July 22, 1946, Irgun – with Haganah complicity – blew up the British Military H.Q., a wing of the King David Hotel. Ninety-one Jews, Arabs and Britons were killed. Irgun later suggested that the disaster was largely the fault of the British: warnings were given to the authorities, Irgun claimed, but they were not taken seriously.

Jerusalem's King David Hotel, one floor of which was used as British Military H.Q., stands shattered by an Irgun blast in 1946. Jews, British and Arabs were among the 91 killed.

Friedman Yellin (with glasses), who became leader of the Stern Gang after Stern was shot by British police, stands trial with another gang member for terrorist activities.

Haganah men acquire the discipline which turned what began as a home defence force into the efficient army that defeated the Arabs after the British Mandate ended in 1948.

A Homeland Becomes a Nation

Fury rose in Palestine in the post-war years, with the Jews mistrusting the Arabs, the Arabs detesting the Jews, and the British plagued by both. Baffled as to how to maintain peace in a land bursting with passion, Britain turned to the United Nations. A special commission recommended partition into separate Arab and Jewish states. They would be, commented a Middle East expert pessimistically, "entwined in an inimical embrace like two fighting serpents."

The U.N. approved partition in November, 1947. Fighting between Jews and Arabs broke out at once, and the following May 14 Britain surrendered the Mandate. The very same day, Israel declared herself an independent state. Her first act was to swing open the gates to refugees who languished in British internment camps and to hundreds of thousands more from Europe and the Arab countries. Jews who had lost all hope flooded at last into their homeland.

Orphans, mostly from eastern Europe, who had been captured in earlier attempts to reach Palestine and held in Cyprus, sail into Haifa soon after the founding of Israel.

Tents crowd a transit camp near Tiberias on Lake Galilee – one of 170 set up to give Israeli immigrants work-training.

II. Terror and Counter-Terror

In 1942, the High Commission had to face a new problem: the Biltmore Programme. This originated in a Jewish Conference held in the Biltmore Hotel, New York, in May, 1942, and demanded that the Jewish Agency should be the judge of immigration quotas and "that Palestine be established as a Jewish Commonwealth." This programme meant the rise of Ben Gurion, the dynamic leader of the Mapai Party, best described as the Labour and Trades Union party of the National Home. As the agitator for a Jewish State to be formed as soon as possible he had, during the previous three years, gained an increasing following among Zionists in Palestine, and he was rapidly becoming a recognized leader among the Jews of the world. The Biltmore resolution also meant the gradual disappearance of Chaim Weizmann as the Zionist leader. Weizmann was the originator of the Biltmore Programme, but he had put it forward – in an article published by the New York monthly *Foreign Affairs* – as an ideal gradually to be attained. Ben Gurion backed it at the Biltmore Hotel meeting as an aspiration immediately to be realized. Weizmann, the master of diplomacy but a lesser master than Ben Gurion of mass appeal, was outraged. The two men came into bitter party conflict. As antagonists they were unequally matched. Weizmann was prematurely aged by grief at the death in action of his son Michael, an officer in the R.A.F. Ben Gurion had a lasting youthful vigour. Weizmann did not return to Palestine till November, 1944. Ben Gurion returned in 1942.

Coincidentally, and in no way through Ben Gurion's fault, there was a growth of Jewish terrorism in 1943. It was the natural consequence of the "Final Solution" which had, almost literally, driven some Jews into a state of madness. Of this the unconsciously self-revealing memoirs of Menachem Begin (later the chief of the terrorist gang "Irgun") give evidence. The reader cannot but be appalled by the hatreds, the delusions, the incapacity for any but narrow views, which Begin expresses. Let Begin be praised for this: he disposes decisively of the fallacy that suffering invariably enobles the mind.

On November 6, 1944, terrorists of the Stern Gang (unconnected then with Begin's Irgun) murdered the British Minister of State in Cairo, Lord Moyne, who was in no sense an enemy of Zion. This meaningless crime followed shortly after the retirement of Sir Harold MacMichael and his succession by Field-Marshal Lord Gort, a former British Commander-in-Chief who had won the admiration of the free world by his courageous and statesmanlike conduct as the Governor of Malta from 1942 to 1944. The murder of Lord Moyne put an end to promising negotiations between Weizmann, still the official Zionist leader, and Churchill, but it was also followed by a revulsion of the Jewish Agency against terrorism which further resulted in an improvement in their relations with the High Commission and Lord Gort.

The next month, December, 1944, the Labour Party in Britain made a memorable political blunder. Foreseeing a general election in the near future, Mr. Attlee committed his party to a programme of total pro-Zionism including unlimited Jewish immigration and the transfer of the bulk of the Arab population to the neighbouring countries. Remembering Lord Samuel's unanswerable arguments in 1937, the Zionist leadership expressed pleasure but were careful not to commit themselves.

The year 1945 saw the end of the war, Labour in power, and the Jews of Europe demanding the right to go to Palestine.

The High Commission had new and daunting problems to face. First Attlee's rash commitment. Second a revival of Arab nationalism in Palestine, following on the formation of the Arab League in 1945. The League members included all of Palestine's neighbours and Iraq, and were united on very little except anti-Zionism. Third and most decisively a renewed American interest in the East since the discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia. United States politicians had to appease both a pro-Arab oil-lobby and a Jewish vote.

Like his predecessor, President Truman was genuinely grieved at the suffering of European Jewry, and simultaneously he had to contend with an oil-lobby grown more important after that most magnificent of American acts of state, the Marshall Plan. The Plan's success depended on the availability of oil in great quantity. Like the British in 1939, the U.S.A. could not afford to quarrel with the Arab world.

In 1945 Truman sent a personal emmissary to Europe, Earl G. Harrison, to ascertain the situation of the Jews. The Jewish Agency had made earlier inquiries. Both reached the same conclusion: 100,000 Jews stood in immediate need of emigration from Nazi-desecrated Europe. Following a Zionist conference in London in August, Ben Gurion led a delegation to the Colonial Office and demanded sanction for a Jewish immigration of 100,000 and the recognition of Palestine as a Jewish State. In the same month Truman sent Attlee Harrison's report urging him to act on its recommendations. Both representations met emphatic refusal from the British side.

The figure of 100,000 had a long and chequered career of which only a bare outline need be given here. First, one must note a change in the structure of the Mandatory. Responsibility was now shared between the Foreign Office (under Ernest Bevin) and the Colonial Office. Then, in November, 1945, Lord Gort was forced to retire when he was found to be ill with cancer. Thus was removed a remarkable character who might have slightly eased the situation. Gort was succeeded by General Sir Alan Cunningham, the last High Commissioner. In the winter of 1945–46 an "Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry" went to Europe and Palestine. In London they met Bevin who declared that if they turned in a unanimous report he would give it full backing. In April, 1946, their unanimous report recommended the continuance of the British Mandate and the admission of 100,000 Jews. Bevin and the British government rejected the report. Truman publicly welcomed it.

Palestine was moving to a state of civil war with three combatants: Jews, Arabs and British. The terrorists had formed an alliance with the Jewish defence force "Haganah"; sabotage and atrocities increased. In June the High Commission in desperation arrested the Zionist leaders. In July, 1946, Irgun blew up the wing of the King David Hotel that housed British Military Headquarters in Jerusalem, killing 91 people, including British, Arabs and Jews. Inevitably this major provocation, accompanied by many minor ones,

bred anti-Semitism among British troops. Anti-Semitism found expression, not only in some sporadic outbreaks but in trends in military policy. The army took to inflicting corporal punishment on arrested terrorists until counter-atrocities of the same kind by terrorists brought this particular folly to an end. But the trend in policy did not cease. In the winter of 1946–47 the British government foolishly raised a special unit to combat terrorism by counter-terrorism. The policy (like all such policies) manifestly failed and only brought the British name into disrepute. It was abandoned in spring, 1947.

To return to 1946: the Arab League began to band together for an invasion of Palestine. Then in late July, 1946, there was a serious Anglo-American attempt to obtain peace.

In Bevin's absence through illness Herbert Morrison acted for the Foreign Office. The American negotiator was Ambassador Henry Grady. They worked out a scheme of Arab and Jewish cantons for Palestine, but the most important provision was British agreement to the immediate immigration of 100,000 Jews, and American agreement to help in their transport. The plan came too late. The Zionists had by now recognized that in asking for 100,000 they had blundered. If their request had been granted they would have been seriously handicapped. A Jewish State was their aim and for that they needed at least three times more than 100,000. This time the emphatic rejection of the plan came from Zionists, both in Britain and America.

The last 18 months of the British Mandate is a story of confusion, inconsistency, loss of nerve, loss of direction, and complication. Irresolution was infectious and everyone who attempted a solution lost his way before long. Nor is this surprising because the problem always had been insoluble except by war.

In February, 1947, Bevin declared that Great Britain would hand back the trusteeship to the United Nations, the natural successor to the League of Nations. He was not believed then or later, and little wonder. The High Commission, acting on governmental orders, did everything possible to frustrate the U.N. as its successor. But the government did mean to leave Palestine none the less. British political behaviour at this moment was hardly sane and was probably attributable to post-war demoralization.

The U.N. made a bold but unavailing attempt to solve the problem by partition through the U.N. Special Committee on Palestine (U.N.S.C.O.P.), in 1947. While U.N.S.C.O.P. was in Palestine there occurred the affair of the refugee boat *Exodus*. The facts may be briefly recalled. Zionist sympathizers in America had bought this boat and renamed it *Exodus 1947*. The boat arrived in Haifa in June, 1947, carrying some 4,500 Jews from Germany. The coincidence of the boat's arrival and U.N.S.C.O.P.'s investigations in Palestine may have been fortuitous, but, if so, as may be doubted, it was most fortunate for the Zionist cause. The traumatic memories of the *Patria* and the *Struma* had made the Jews of Palestine sensitive to what may be called "boat-propaganda," and the refusal of the British authorities to allow the passengers to land led to wild scenes of protest in Haifa and Jerusalem. If Bevin had been clever he would have allowed the passengers in as a special concession while U.N.S.C.O.P. were the government's guests. But Bevin had the short-sightedness of an angry temperament.

The ship, with a British military escort on board, was sent back to its port of embarkation near Marseilles. When the French authorities were assured by the official Zionist spokesman that none except a few extreme invalids wished to land, the French refused to interfere. In the meantime further Irgun and other terrorist atrocities, notably the hanging of two British sergeants with explosive booby-traps concealed on one of the bodies, had inflamed British opinion, and there followed some anti-Semitic disorders in several British cities where there were large Jewish populations. The government feared that these disorders might increase if the 4,500 were landed in Britain. Therefore, the Jews in *Exodus* were sent back to Hamburg for asylum in the British zone of occupied Germany.

The Prime Minister, Clement Attlee (standing), presides over an abortive conference in 1946 in which the Arab League states demanded that Jewish immigration into Palestine be totally prohibited.

FINALE WITH BLOODSHED

Jews danced in the streets the day the United Nations voted to partition Palestine. But their celebration was short-lived. Arabs attacked at once in Haifa, Tel Aviv, Jaffa, Lydda and Jerusalem, determined to alter the U.N. settlement by force. Over the next few months assaults along the roads and on isolated settlements intensified. The Jews struck back with equal venom. Both sides had been amassing illegal weapons under the noses of the British, and both were geared for war. A few hours after the proclamation of Israel's independence in May, 1948, Arab troops – many of them, ironically, British-trained – struck from Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq.

Arab irregulars swarm across the Jordan River to reach Jewish territory. Guerrilla marauders were as much involved as were regular armies.

The Arab Legion moves against the enemy. This British-trained force, the most efficient in the Middle East, was fully mobile, with jeeps and armoured cars equipped with radio.

Sir John Glubb (right), the British General who was in command of Jordan's Arab Legion, talks with King Abdullah.

During Arab riots at the line where the ancient city of Jaffa meets the modern city of Tel Aviv, Haganah troops stand watch while a housewife hurries to buy food for her family.

The Unending War

Palestine's last High Commissioner had predicted that Britain's departure would be followed by "misery, distress and chaos." The war which raged for seven months was far more terrible than he had envisaged. Jews and Arabs strove alike in bitter combat, each to hold what the United Nations had accorded, each to grab from the other what it had been denied. Arabs fled their homes to seek refuge in the cover of orange groves. Jews in remote and lonely *kibbutzim* were held under siege.

At last hostilities ended with a grudging series of armistice agreements between Israel and the Arab nations. Egypt occupied the Gaza Strip, and Jordan annexed Judea, Samaria and the Old City of Jerusalem. But it was a peace in name only. Sporadic outbursts continued and broke into open warfare again in 1956 when Israeli units routed Egyptian forces east of the Suez Canal. In 1967, in the "Six-Day War," Israel extended her territory to include all of Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank of the Jordan and Syria's Golan Heights. Enmity between Arab and Jews remains unabated.

A Haganah soldier takes a wounded Arab prisoner. In the inch-by-inch struggle for every plot of sacred ground, military men and civilians often came face to face.

Jewish cavalry mop up after a frenzied and destructive contest for a lonely village waged in the oven-hot chamsin, the dry withering wind that blows from the desert.

An Orthodox youth, one of the many untrained Israelis who rallied to the cause, helps Haganah defend a stronghold.

Girls of the Israeli Air Force practise anti-aircraft gunnery. Women inducted into the services fulfilled all duties except front-line combat.

Haganah maintains an alert at a deserted Arab post in the village of el Bessa, near the old Crusader port of Acre in northern Palestine.

III. The Birth of Israel

The *Exodus* affair gave the propagandists their cue. Jews had been sent back to Germany! Here was proof indeed, so the propagandists claimed, of Nazi-minded British cruelty! Articles, books, a film gave the affair of the *Exodus* a Zionist-slanted world-wide fame. In its blaze, the memory of the many innocent victims in the King David Hotel assassination, and much else of horror, was dimmed, almost extinguished. But the fierce scenes of struggle when the ship reached Hamburg and the passengers were forced to disembark does seem to prove that this successful propaganda effort was based on a considerable and, for the British, inconvenient measure of truth.

Propaganda was a large cause of the outbreak of the Arab-Jewish War of 1948. The Arab League members had intoxicated themselves with anti-Zionism so fervently that they could not retreat now. After 1945 Egypt had reluctantly agreed to join the League's aggressive policies, following King Farouk's absurd ambitions to make of himself not only the head of the Arab League, but a *de facto* Caliph, the leader not only of the Arabic-speaking but the whole Muslim world, a role for which he was grossly unfitted. The Zionists, having convinced themselves with their own propaganda, had put themselves in a position where compromise became very difficult, though the leadership did try compromise in accepting U.N.S.C.O.P.'s partition plan. The leaders of neither side wanted war, but the dragon's teeth had already been sown.

If the British wanted to maintain peace, they went the worst way about it. The Mandatory had a sound case when they allowed the well-disciplined British-officered Arab Legion into the Arab area allotted by the U.N.S.C.O.P. partition, but they showed only irresponsibility when they allowed irregular troops from Syria and Lebanon to march into Palestine during the first weeks of 1948. The war in effect started while the Mandatory was still in nominal control and British military opinion anticipated a swift Arab victory. The fallacy of this opinion was soon obvious. At the end of March the Zionist forces received secretly a massive supply of arms from Czechoslovakia. For that reason Czechoslovakia has sometimes been saluted as the saviour of Zion, but the Czech interest seems to have been only mercenary. The Czechoslovakian government sold equal quantities of arms to Arabs. However, Zionist agents organized a theft of the last-mentioned arms and redirected them to Jewish fighters.

Though the Jewish Army was compelled a little later than this to surrender almost the whole Jewish quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, a most bitter sacrifice, they were able at the beginning of April to fight a long battle with decisive success west of Jerusalem. This victory enabled them to keep the road to the coast open and, with great difficulty, to retain the new part of Jerusalem, west of the historic city. Before this battle was concluded on April 9, the Zionist terrorists were guilty of the most ghastly of all atrocities perpetrated in modern Palestine. On April 8, at the village of Dir Yassin, they slaughtered 254 men, women and children, nearly the whole village population. Three days later Arab guerrillas replied with a counter-atrocity by massacring Jewish doctors and nurses caught in an ambush. There was a further Jewish reprisal in a suburb of Jerusalem.

Since January, 1948, there had been an increasing flight of Arab peasants from the country, and, as panic grew, the fleeing thousands turned to tens and then hundreds of thousands. The British had lost the will and now the capacity to impose order. As helpless spectators they watched a policy undertaken with rash idealism go down amid hate and bloodshed. A day earlier than announced, on May 14, 1948, the last High Commissioner left Palestine. On the same day Ben Gurion proclaimed the State of Israel. By a secret agreement with Dr. Weizmann, President Truman immediately signified the recognition of the new State by the U.S.A. For reasons different from Truman's, Stalin signified U.S.S.R. recognition. Before such a combination Great Britain had no choice and finally recognized the new State in January, 1949

David Ben Gurion, as Israel's first Prime Minister, proclaims independence in 1948. The British dream of Jew and Arab living in peace under British patronage was finally, irrevocably over.

Field Officer, Royal Waggon Train, 1828

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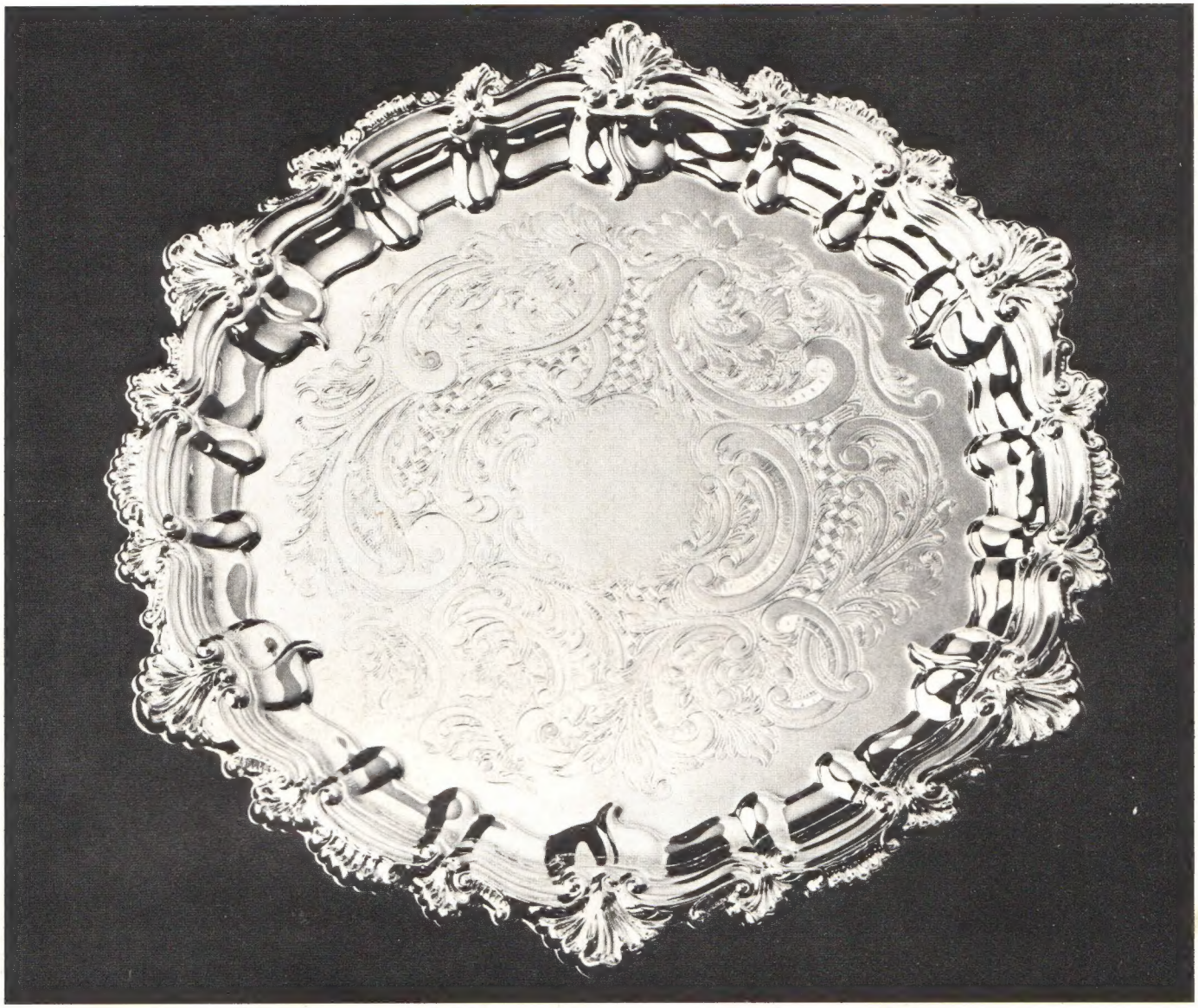

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